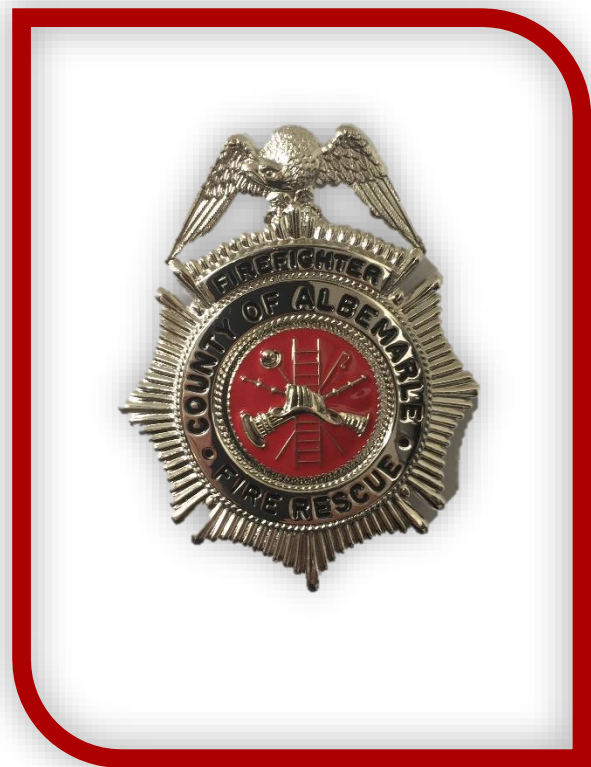


FIRE RESCUE

ALBEMARLE COUNTY

The Albemarle County Fire Rescue Way



Albemarle County Fire Rescue
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Charlottesville, VA 22902
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Introduction

This is the ACFR Way. The Albemarle County Fire Rescue (ACFR) Way is a philosophy that describes in detail the way each ACFR member, regardless of rank or position, is expected to perform, behave, and interact with each other and the residents and community we serve. Our personnel, frequently referred to as our family, are our greatest asset and the foundation of our department. We each make the choice to become part of ACFR and the ACFR Way requires a constant, conscious, and intentional effort from each of us to be successful. Success also relies heavily on leaders and seasoned personnel of our department actively mentoring new members to foster the culture described herein.

The standards and expectations in this document are reasonable and in alignment with the County of Albemarle's Pillars of High Performance, County policy, ACFR's vision and mission, ACFR's hiring and promotional processes, as well as ACFR policies and standard operating guidelines. The ACFR Way is a foundation from which to view one's day-to-day performance, commitment to the community, and commitment to Albemarle County Fire Rescue.

This is the ACFR Way

Commitment requires loyalty, through good times and bad, to the community, the County of Albemarle, ACFR, and the Fire & EMS Service. At ACFR, we lean into challenges and difficult conversations with honesty and integrity, becoming stronger through the process. We are a family committed to reducing risks and enhancing the lives of those within our community.

We are a professional fire and EMS department that delivers equitable, safe, responsive, high-quality services. The decisions we make are consistent with these qualities. We are fiscally responsible, inclusive, skilled, physically fit, and empathetic. With these qualities comes great personal responsibility; each member accepts this responsibility upon joining ACFR, carrying it through retirement.

The ACFR Way is founded upon three pillars that make up our philosophy. These pillars are described in detail below and are practiced by everyone chosen to become a member of the ACFR family.

Culture | Professionalism | Ethics

How we treat people | How we perform our job | How we conduct ourselves

Culture

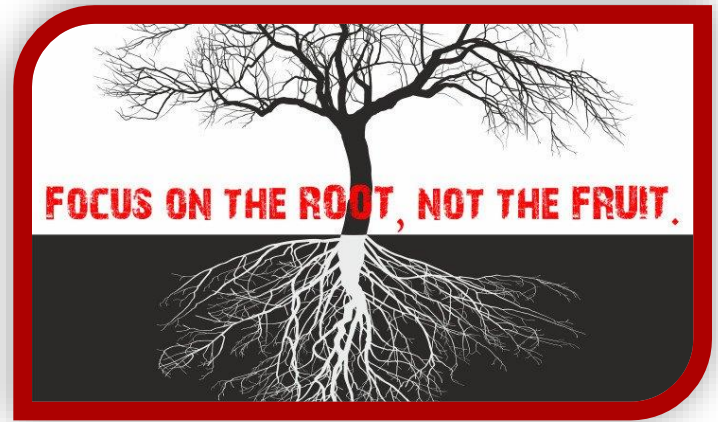
Culture is the character and personality of our organization and it can be argued that culture is the sum of our values, traditions, beliefs, interactions, behaviors, and attitudes. Culture is certainly what makes our department unique, and we believe that culture can be intentional – and we expect our personnel to be intentional in creating and maintaining our culture. Part of being intentional is holding peers accountable to the culture we desire to create – respectfully letting others know when their decisions, actions, or attitudes do not support our culture. It also means pointing out when individuals do not engage in the hard conversations of holding a peer accountable. ACFR desires a thriving positive work culture. A positive workplace attracts talent, drives engagement, impacts happiness and satisfaction, and affects performance. With this in mind, our primary focus is supporting those who actively represent our culture, engage in hard conversations, and make great decisions.

ACFR has adopted a Culture First philosophy. Meaning that if we focus on cultivating a positive and inclusive culture (the root), all other aspects of our organization (the fruit) will thrive as well. In defining our culture, we are specifically focusing on how we treat others. A positive attitude, inclusion, respect, empathy, and tackling difficult conversations are all key attributes that are essential to our desired culture. All ACFR members are expected to reflect these qualities in their daily interactions with people.

POSITIVE

A positive and energetic attitude is perhaps the most critical aspect of a good culture. A positive work environment is infectious and energizes the team, increases morale, helps one manage stress, and increases productivity. In contrast, a negative attitude drains energy from the team and drives out valued members. ACFR is a fun and rewarding place to be.

- We approach day-to-day work with an upbeat attitude and seek fun in our work.
- We lean into conflict; we know it's healthy. We have difficult conversations.
- We hold each other accountable to the ACFR Way.
- We lift others up when they are down.
- We remain positive in the face of negativity – we help the group/team find the solution and/or positive aspects of a situation.
- We approach change with an open mind and optimism.
- Our work is critical and serious; we accept that responsibility. At the same time, we have fun where and when we can and recognize the mental and physical health benefits of not taking ourselves too seriously.
- We avoid unproductive complaining; our complaints are focused on pragmatic solutions.



INCLUSIVE

ACFR's culture is one where all members feel as though they belong. A welcoming and inclusive environment is essential to the family atmosphere we strive to create within ACFR. This begins with how we welcome people into our stations and onto our team. When you acknowledge and invite people into the group it immediately begins to break down barriers and establish strong relationships.

Recognizing and embracing the value of diversity makes us a stronger, more effective, and more successful team in everything we do. We are dedicated to reflecting and respecting diversity throughout our organization. We foster a sense of belonging.

- We greet people with a positive and welcoming attitude/posture – particularly as a group/team when someone joins the group/team.
- We don't isolate ourselves or others.
- We include others in conversation and activities – seeking their contribution.
- We engage in open dialogue and get to know each other while respecting boundaries, both professional and personal. We also recognize that dialogue is imperfect and that it takes effort to achieve dialogue.
- We respect and value each other's differences.
- We have fun, but not at the expense of other people.
- We do not tolerate harassment or prejudice of any kind – period.

RESPECTFUL

Mutual respect helps build trust while reducing conflict. No one wants to feel like they are being disregarded, so it is important to extend dignity and respect to everyone you encounter. Practicing good communication skills, including active listening, helps people feel heard and keeps conflicts from escalating. The culture at ACFR is one of respect.

- We treat others with respect, seeking to understand how they may wish to be treated.
- We start with the assumption that people have good intentions.
- We check our ego.
- We don't let disagreements turn personal.
- We don't gossip - won't listen to it from others and dispel it by seeking the truth.
- We allow others to feel safe enough to express vulnerabilities.
- We suspend judgement for curiosity; we ask questions seeking to understand.

EMPATHETIC

Empathy is the ability to not only understand another person's feelings, but to put yourself in their shoes and imagine what they're thinking and feeling in each situation. Empathy should be felt not only for teammates and co-workers, but for customers as well. Our customers call us for help when they are experiencing a crisis, and while they rely on our technical skills, they tend to remember how we made them feel far more than what we did. We are empathetic.

- We actively listen to connect with the feelings of others.
- We show and share emotion and feelings, particularly when related to providing quality customer service.
- We help each other to see things from the perspective of another.
- We treat every customer as if they are the first of the day, every time.
- We are in the moment – we are right here, right now, and nowhere else.

Professionalism

Albemarle County Fire Rescue personnel have numerous opportunities each day to display professionalism and each day we prove our value to the community. Whether it is our physical presentation, driving, technical skills, tone of voice, or station behavior, we must always remember that we are accountable to our co-workers and the public. The following attributes define what professionalism looks like for our members.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The membership of ACFR delivers unyielding professionalism and personal accountability in every aspect of our performance. These traits represent the most distinguishing factors related to our perpetual commitment to excellent customer service.

We will provide every customer with an experience that is professional, empathetic, and responsive.

To define our customer is not a complex task – anyone we encounter is a customer. Our customers may be individuals that dial 911, hospital staff, law enforcement, visitors, or neighbors. Everyone we encounter is our customer.

Professionals don't judge these encounters in level of importance. Professionals arrive ready, willing, and able to assist in any endeavor, large or small, when called upon to help. It is crucial that we understand that we are many things to many people and the services we provide cover a very broad range. Our customers are not an interruption in our work; they are our work. We focus on customer service.

- We respect and value the diversity in our community by providing services to all customers in a fair and equitable manner.
- We understand customer needs by focusing on what the customer says.
- We are consistent, honest, and responsive to our customers.
- We treat all customers with courtesy (yes, we are nice!).
- We maintain a positive attitude towards service – striving to exceed customer expectations.
- We are an advocate for our customer.

COMPETENT

Our customers rely on the competence of our members to provide safe, efficient, and effective services. While building competency begins during initial training, it must continue throughout your career. Your ability to master your craft and perform under pressure can literally mean the difference between life and death - ours and our customers. We strive to ensure competency.

- We consider the risk(s) of our actions prior to taking them.
- We are committed to lifelong learning.
- We are innovative and look for opportunities to improve performance.
- We train like lives depend on it, because they do.
- We perform incident debriefs to identify successes and areas for improvement.
- We are open to new ideas, research, and techniques.
- We remain aware of industry changes and best practices.
- We finish what we start.

PREPARED

ACFR's ability to provide adequate customer service depends on our operational readiness and our operational readiness depends on our people and our equipment.

We are individually and collectively responsible for our physical and mental health. Each member has an obligation to be as resilient and emotionally, mentally, and physically fit as possible. We will encourage and support each other to make healthy lifestyle choices, not only to ensure we are prepared to serve our community, but also to achieve the goal of a long and healthy life into retirement.

Our apparatus and equipment must be inspected regularly with careful attention to detail to ensure we are fully prepared to meet the community's needs at any moment. In addition, daily inspection ensures our familiarity with equipment operation and protects the community's considerable investment. ACFR members are always prepared.

- We maintain physical fitness through functional strength and cardiovascular training.
- We build emotional and mental resiliency through stress management and by seeking assistance when needed (peer support, EAP, chaplain, etc).
- We are observant and take quick action when recognizing a member whose well-being is in jeopardy.
- We take disease prevention recommendations seriously and practice good infection control methods such as hand washing, use of PPE, and disinfection of common surfaces.
- We maintain equipment and apparatus in good operating order by completing checks routinely and with meticulous attention to detail.

IMAGE

We are respected, trusted, admired, and identified by our uniforms, our vehicles, and the manner in which we serve. It is essential that we not only protect that image but build upon it.

Maintaining a clean, professional, and consistent uniform identifies us as members of Albemarle County Fire Rescue and invokes pride and confidence in our customers. The condition of our apparatus and stations also reflect our image as professionals.

Social media is a powerful communication and marketing tool. When we identify ourselves as members of Albemarle County Fire Rescue on social media, that site becomes an extension of the workplace, not solely a personal site. Be aware of the impact of your social media footprint, as well as the ripple effects - both positive and negative. The following is expected of every member regarding a commitment to maintaining a positive public image.

- We maintain a clean professional uniform.
- We maintain clean apparatus and facilities with an emphasis on pride in appearance.
- We are visible and engaged in the community we serve.
- We use social media responsibly.

Ethics

Ethics comes from the Greek word ethos, meaning character. Character is not only defined by how a person behaves when conditions are optimal, and life is good. It is easy to take the high road when the path is paved, and obstacles are few or non-existent. Character is also defined by decisions made under pressure, when no one is looking, when the road contains land mines, and the way is obscured. As members of the Fire Service, we share a responsibility to project the ethical traits of professionalism, integrity, compassion, loyalty, and honesty in all that we do, all the time.



When one becomes a public servant by joining the department, one's actions becomes a reflection of the Department. Our regard in the community can be tarnished by the actions of just one member, and those consequences will be felt by all members. Therefore, an individual's conduct must always be exemplary.

For Albemarle County Fire Rescue, ethics is further defined as an understanding, commitment, and adherence to Albemarle County's Pillars of High Performance (Leadership Philosophy | Values | Business Operating Principles) and the National Society of Executive Fire Officers' Code of Ethics. Specifically, the core values described in the County's Pillars are integral to conducting oneself ethically as an ACFR member. Not only is each member expected to conduct oneself ethically, but every member is expected to hold each other accountable to these high standards as well.

CORE VALUES

Core values form the foundation of how we perform work and conduct ourselves. Even though our environment may change, our values remain constant, underpinning our work and the strategies we use to fulfill our mission.

The following core values guide the decisions and actions of all Albemarle County public servants and should be reflected in every action of our members.

Community: We expect diversity, equity, and inclusion to be integrated into how we live our mission.

Integrity: We value our customers and co-workers by always providing honest and fair treatment.

Innovation: We embrace creativity and positive change.

Stewardship: We honor our role as stewards of the public trust by managing our natural, human, and financial resources respectfully and responsibly.

Learning: We encourage and support lifelong learning and personal and professional growth.

SUMMARY

The ACFR Way is OUR philosophy. This document supports and describes the way in which we fulfill our mission to safely and efficiently serve the public and take care of each other. Putting this philosophy into practice requires a constant, conscious effort from each of us. We are members of the Albemarle Fire Rescue Department by choice – both our own AND the Department's. We are committed to superior service. It is this commitment to service and to each other that has made us what we are today and will sustain us in the future.